

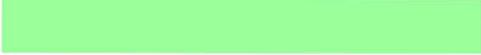


U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

(b)(6)



DATE: **SEP 06 2013** OFFICE: **NEBRASKA SERVICE CENTER**

IN RE: 

APPLICATION: Application for Status as a Temporary Resident pursuant to Section 245A of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended, 8 U.S.C. § 1255a

FILE: 

ON BEHALF OF APPLICANT:



INSTRUCTIONS:

Enclosed please find the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. This is a non-precedent decision. The AAO does not announce new constructions of law nor establish agency policy through non-precedent decisions.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Rosenberg", written over the typed name.

Ron Rosenberg  
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

**DISCUSSION:** The Nebraska Service Center Director (director) denied the Application for Temporary Resident Status (Form I-687). In a separate action, the director certified its decision to the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) for review. The director's decision to dismiss the Form I-687 application will be withdrawn and the application will be approved.

The applicant filed an Application for Temporary Resident Status pursuant to Section 245A of the Immigration and Nationality Act (Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1225a. The director denied the application, finding the applicant's July 22, 1982 departure pursuant to a deportation order meant the applicant failed to maintain the required continuous residence. See Section 245A(g)(2)(b)(i) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1255a(g)(2)(b)(i).<sup>1</sup>

On April 4, 2013, the director granted the applicant's motion and reopened the Form I-690, Application for Waiver of Grounds of Inadmissibility, and the Form I-687 application.

This matter has a complex procedural history. In *Proyecto San Pablo v. INS*, No. CIV 89-456-TUC-WDB (D. Ariz. Feb. 2, 2001), the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona held that the legacy Immigration and Nationalization Service (legacy INS) violated the due process rights of a class of applicants for legalization under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) when it denied those applicants access to their complete deportation or exclusion files and prevented them from seeking waivers to "cure" prior deportations or exclusions. On March 27, 2001, the court ordered the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to reopen legalization applications filed by class members and (1) accept waiver applications submitted by class members and adjudicate them in the same manner as waiver applications filed by other legalization applicants were adjudicated; and (2) prior to making a decision on a reopened legalization application, provide the applicant with complete copies of prior deportation files, including copies of tapes and/or transcripts of the hearings before the immigration court, to enable the applicant to bring a collateral challenge to the deportation order, if appropriate. Subsequently, in *Proyecto San Pablo v. Dept of Homeland Security*, No. CV 89-456-TUC-RCC (D. Ariz. May 4, 2007), the court reiterated its March 27, 2001 holding and ruled that, if the entire record cannot be located by the defendants, the following burden of proof will apply:

A legalization applicant who may be denied on the basis of 8 U.S.C. 1225a(g)(2)(B)(i), or because of a prior deportation or exclusion order, must make a *prima facie* showing that the prior deportation or exclusion order was not in compliance with the governing statute or regulations, or occurred in violation of due process, or was otherwise unlawful or involved a gross miscarriage of justice. If the applicant makes such a showing, then CIS has the burden of coming forward with a copy of the tape and/or transcript of the prior deportation or exclusion hearing . . . If CIS does not produce such evidence from the prior deportation or exclusion file,

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<sup>1</sup> The section provides that "an alien shall not be considered to have resided continuously in the United States, if, during any period for which continuous residence is required, the alien was outside the United States as a result of a departure under an order of deportation."

then the prior deportation or exclusion cannot be used as evidence to support a denial of legalization benefits.

In his April 26, 2013 legal brief, counsel for the applicant states that although he has filed Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests on the applicant's behalf, legacy INS and USCIS have failed to provide the applicant with a copy of the tape recording and/or transcript of his deportation proceeding. Legacy INS released 62 pages of record material to the applicant on September 8, 1994 and another 64 pages on September 23, 1996. On June 30, 2003, USCIS released 103 pages of record material to the applicant. On September 3, 2004, USCIS released 222 pages of record material to the applicant, but was unable to provide a tape recording and/or transcript of the applicant's deportation hearing. In a letter dated March 23, 2005, the USCIS NSC Acting Director indicated that "after an additional search we are still unable to locate a copy of any tape or transcript of any deportation hearing." Similarly, the record reflects that in a letter dated July 13, 2004, an EOIR Paralegal Specialist noted that after a considerable search, the agency was unable to locate any record regarding the applicant's deportation proceeding.

The record does not indicate that the applicant ever received a copy of the tape recordings and/or the transcripts of his deportation hearings. The applicant's physical file (currently in the possession of the AAO) contains no such tape and/or transcripts. As a result, USCIS has complied with the District Court's order to the extent that it has provided the applicant with a copy of his legalization file as it currently exists.

To invoke a shift in the burden of proof from the applicant to USCIS, the applicant must make a *prima facie* showing that his deportation order was either: the result of proceedings not in compliance with the governing law or regulations; or occurred in violation of due process; or was otherwise unlawful or involved a gross miscarriage of justice.

In this case, the director granted the applicant's Motion to Reopen and approved the applicant's Form I-690, Application for Waiver of Grounds of Inadmissibility, on humanitarian grounds. However, the director found the applicant failed to satisfy the continuous residence requirement of section 245A(a)(2)(A) of the Act. The director therefore denied the application and certified the matter to the AAO for a ruling. In rendering a decision, the director did not address whether the applicant was provided with a complete copy of his deportation file nor did the director discuss whether the applicant submitted *prima facie* evidence that his deportation order was not in compliance with the governing statute or regulations, or occurred in violation of due process, or resulted in a gross miscarriage of justice, as required by the amended *Proyecto* order.

The standard for establishing a *prima facie* case means the evidence reveals a reasonable likelihood that requirements have been satisfied. See *Fernandez v. Gonzales*, 439 F.3d 592, n.6 (9th Cir. 2006) (citing *Ordonez v. INS*, 345 F.3d 777, 785 (9th Cir.2003) (citations omitted)). A reasonable likelihood means showing a realistic chance that the petitioner can establish the issue in

question at a later time. *Guo v. Ashcroft*, 386 F.3d 556, 564 (3rd Cir. 2004) (discussing the *prima facie* standard in the context of motions to reopen).

In applying these standards, the Board of Immigration Appeals (Board) and most Circuits employ a balancing test and weigh all evidence for and against in determining whether a *prima facie* case has been made. See *Zheng v. Mukasey*, 546 F.3d 70, 72 (1st Cir. 2008) (discussing the issue in the context of a motion to reopen); *Wang v. BIA*, 437 F.3d 270, 276 (2d Cir. 2006) (same); *Matter of J-W-S-*, 24 I&N Dec. 185, 191-92; *Matter of C-C*, 23 I&N Dec. 899, 902-03 (BIA 2006) (same); *Guo v. Ashcroft*, 386 F.3d 556, 564-66 (3d Cir. 2004) (same).

Counsel for the applicant contends that the documentary evidence and the circumstances surrounding the applicant's July 22, 1982 departure pursuant to a deportation order shows it was defective and entered in violation of the governing statute and regulations.

Counsel states that the applicant was not informed of his right to seek voluntary departure. However, the Board has noted that the regulations in effect before the passage of the 1996 amendments to the Act requiring immigration judges to inform aliens of apparent eligibility for relief did not include voluntary departure. *Matter of Cordova*, 22 I&N Dec. 966, 970 n.4 (BIA 1999) (citing former 8 C.F.R. § 242.17(a), which required Immigration Judges "to inform the respondent of his or her apparent eligibility to apply for any of the benefits enumerated in *this paragraph* and . . . afford the respondent an opportunity to make application therefor during the hearing" (emphasis added)). The Board further noted that the opportunity to apply for voluntary departure was described in former 8 C.F.R. § 242.17(b), which contained no notification requirement. *Id.* In contrast, the current regulations require immigration judges to inform the respondent of apparent eligibility for all "benefits enumerated in *this chapter*," which includes voluntary departure. 8 C.F.R. § 240.11(a)(2) (emphasis added). As the regulations in effect at the time of the applicant's deportation hearing required no duty to inform an alien of voluntary departure as a form of relief, counsel may not establish a violation by alleging that the applicant had a right to be informed of such relief.

Counsel asserts that the applicant was not informed of his right to appeal the decision of the immigration judge to the Board. However, the Order to Show Cause (OSC) issued against the applicant and personally served upon him on June 20, 1982 contains a notation indicating that the applicant was furnished a Notice of Appeal Rights (Form I-618). In addition, the OSC contains a notation by the Special Inquiry Officer indicating that the applicant waived his right to appeal to the Board. As such, the counsel's contention is contradicted by the documentary evidence in the record and is insufficient to establish a *prima facie* showing pursuant to the 2007 *Proyecto* order.

Counsel next states that the applicant was not informed of his right to counsel. At the time of the applicant's deportation proceeding, section 292 of the Act provided as follows:

In any exclusion or deportation proceedings before a special inquiry officer and in any appeal proceedings before the Attorney General from any such exclusion or deportation proceedings, the person concerned shall have the privilege of being represented (at no expense to the Government) by such counsel, authorized to practice in such proceedings, as he shall choose.

8 U.S.C. § 1362.

The Attorney General promulgated 8 C.F.R. § 242.16(a) to implement former section 292 of the Act. At the time of the applicant's deportation proceedings, 8 C.F.R. § 242.16(a) provided in pertinent part:

The Immigration Judge shall advise the respondent of his right to representation, at no expense to the Government, by counsel of his own choice authorized to practice in the proceedings and require him to state then and there whether he desires representation; [and] advise the respondent of the availability of free legal services programs . . . in the district where the deportation hearing is being held[.]

8 C.F.R. § 242.16(a) (1987).

Here, the OSC issued against the applicant and personally served upon him on June 20, 1982 contains a notation indicating that the applicant was furnished a Notice of Appeal Rights (Form I-618) and a list of free legal service providers. Further, the applicant's Record of Deportable Alien (Form I-213) reflects that on June 20, 1982, the applicant "was advised of his rights per Miranda." Consequently, documentary evidence in the record indicates that the applicant was afforded a list of free legal service providers, as required by former section 242(b)(2) of the Act, and was advised of his right to counsel. However, we note that the statute and regulations provide that the alien respondent be notified of the right to counsel at various stages of the deportation proceeding, including in the OSC, *see* INA § 242B(a)(1)(E) (1982), and at the start of the deportation hearing itself, *see* 8 C.F.R. § 242.16(a) (1982).<sup>2</sup> As the tape recording of the applicant's deportation hearing is unavailable, the AAO is unable to determine whether the immigration judge advised the applicant of his right to counsel at the commencement of the deportation hearing.

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<sup>2</sup> Section 242B(a)(1)(E) of the Act provides that in deportation proceedings, written notice shall be given in person to the alien specifying that he or she may be represented by counsel and that the alien will be provided with a list of persons who may be available to represent aliens in deportation proceedings *pro bono*. The regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 242.16(a) adds that, at the commencement of the deportation hearing, the immigration judge shall advise the alien of his or her right to counsel of his or her choosing at no expense to the government, shall require the alien to state then and there whether he or she desires representation, and shall advise the alien of the availability of free legal services programs. The immigration judge shall also ascertain that the alien has received a list of such programs.

Counsel contends that the record does not contain evidence to show that the immigration judge made a finding of deportability by clear, unequivocal and convincing evidence, as required by 8 C.F.R. § 242.14(a) (1982). Counsel indicates that as there is no tape recording of the deportation hearing, the record is insufficient to find that the immigration judge orally made the requisite findings of 8 C.F.R. § 242.14(a) to support the deportation order. Further, as the record does not contain a Form EOIR-37, Summary of Oral Decision-Deportation, it appears that the provisions of 8 C.F.R. § 242.18(a) apply, requiring a discussion on the record by the immigration judge of the evidence and the findings as to deportability. See 8 C.F.R. § 242.18(a) (1982) (“The decision of the immigration judge may be oral or written. Except when deportability is determined on the pleadings pursuant to § 242.16(b), the decision of the immigration judge shall include a discussion of the evidence and findings as to deportability.”) However, the record does not contain a verbatim recording to meet this regulatory requirement.

Consequently, counsel asserts that, under the terms of the *Proyecto* amended order, the deportation order occurred in violation of the governing regulations because there is no evidence that the court maintained a recording of the deportation hearing. The relevant regulation in existence at the time of the applicant’s deportation hearing in 1982, 8 C.F.R. § 242.15, indicated that “[t]he hearing shall be recorded verbatim except for statements made off the record with the permission of the special inquiry officer.” Counsel has repeatedly requested a copy of the tape recording and/or transcript of the hearing. It is likely that the hearing was recorded, and possible that it was included among other hearings on one tape (as we understand was frequently the case); however, EOIR and USCIS searches have not produced a copy of the recording.

Legacy INS released 62 pages of record material to the applicant on September 8, 1994 and another 64 pages on September 23, 1996. On June 30, 2003, USCIS released 103 pages of record material to the applicant. Further, on September 3, 2004, USCIS released 222 pages of record material to the applicant, but was unable to provide a tape recording and/or transcript of the applicant’s deportation hearing. In a letter dated March 23, 2005, the USCIS NSC Acting Director indicated that “after an additional search we are still unable to locate a copy of any tape or transcript of any deportation hearing.” The EOIR has also been unable to provide the applicant with a tape recording and/or transcript of the deportation hearing. The current entire USCIS record, which is before the AAO, does not contain a tape recording or transcript. It appears that USCIS and EOIR have fully complied with the court’s order to provide the applicant with all available records relating to his deportation proceedings. While the applicant does not appear to be statutorily eligible for legalization without the special rules of construction set out by the court in the *Proyecto* amended order and the outstanding deportation order appears valid under current ninth circuit case law (and has apparently never been challenged to EOIR or to the Court of Appeals), we are obliged to follow, to the letter, the 2007 amended *Proyecto* order.

In light of the foregoing, we find the evidence sufficient to determine that the applicant has made a *prima facie* showing that the proceedings which resulted in his deportation were not in compliance with the governing regulations because there is no evidence that the immigration court maintained

a recording of the deportation hearing. As a result, USCIS cannot use the prior deportation order as evidence to support a denial of legalization benefits. Consequently, pursuant to the terms of the 2007 amended *Proyecto* order the AAO is constrained to find that the applicant has overcome the particular basis of the denial cited by the director.

An applicant for temporary residence must establish entry into the United States before January 1, 1982, and continuous residence in the United States in an unlawful status since such date and through the date the application is filed. Section 245(a)(2) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1255a(a)(2). An alien shall not be considered to have resided continuously in the United States if, during any period for which continuous residence is required, the alien was outside the United States under an order of deportation. Section 245A(g)(2)(B)(i), 8 U.S.C. § 1255a(g)(2)(B)(i).

The applicant has the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence that he or she has resided in the United States for the requisite periods, is admissible to the United States under the provisions of section 245A of the Act, and is otherwise eligible for adjustment of status. The inference drawn from the documentation provided shall depend on the extent of the documentation, its credibility and amenability to verification. 8 C.F.R. § 245a.2(d)(5).

An alien who applies for adjustment to temporary resident status must also establish that he or she is admissible to the United States as an immigrant, and has not been convicted of any felony, or three or more misdemeanors. Section 245A(a)(4)(B) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1255a(a)(4)(B). In addition, an applicant for temporary resident status must establish that he or she is not ineligible for admission under one or more of the categories listed in the Act. Section 245A(a)(4)(A), 8 U.S.C. § 1255a(a)(4)(A).

In support of his Form I-687 legalization application, the applicant submitted sufficient documentary evidence including: copy of a California driver's license issued in 1977, copy of a California driver's license issued in 1981, copy of a California identification card issued in 1983, California DMV records, employment verification letters, and witness affidavits, all dated during the requisite period. The contemporaneous documents submitted by the applicant are credible. Upon review, the AAO finds that the documents furnished in this case may be accorded sufficient evidentiary weight to meet the applicant's burden of proof of establishing his continuous unlawful residence in the United States for the requisite period.

The AAO finds that the applicant has met his burden of proof of establishing his eligibility for temporary resident status under section 245A of the Act. The applicant established his continuous unlawful residence throughout the requisite period. Though there is documentation in the record suggesting the applicant was involved in smuggling aliens to the United States, we note that his Form I-690, Application for Waiver of Grounds of Inadmissibility, was approved on humanitarian

grounds. Therefore, the applicant is admissible to the United States and has established his eligibility for temporary resident status under section 245A of the Act.<sup>3</sup>

**ORDER:** The director's decision denying the applicant's Form I-687 application is withdrawn. The application is approved.

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<sup>3</sup> The record shows that on June 21, 1982, the applicant was convicted in the United States District Court for the Southern District of California of misdemeanor illegal entry in violation of 8 U.S.C. § 1325. For this offense, the applicant was sentenced to 30 days of imprisonment. A single misdemeanor conviction does not disqualify the applicant for temporary resident status. See section 245A(a)(4)(B) of the Act.